Neo-Nazi Chief Discovers World Is Against Him

By AL HAAS 5/25/72
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CHARLES KRESS' apartment at Cumberland and Sepviva has steel sheathing on the front door and heavy steel mesh protecting the windows.

Th 36-year-old neo-Nazi's precautions seemed to have some justification this past weekend, when a bomb exploded in his neighbor's doorway. Police said at the time that the explosive apparently was intended for Kress' place.

My Philadelphia

Whatever the bomb's purpose, it did draw media attention to Kress and his political beliefs . . .

One of the first things you noticed about Kress' living room was the huge, ceiling-high oven in one corner. Reflectively, you thought of Dachau, of Auschwitz, of Buchenwald, of wherever the Nazis cremated Jews.

"This place used to be a bakery," Kress said with a smile.

Kress is a card-carrying "supporter" of the National Socialist White People's Party (NSWPP)—the new title that George Lincoln Rockwell gave his American Nazi Party before he was shot to death. The man's cramped living room-office gives mute testimony to this allegiance.

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THE SWASTIKA IS everywhere. On the Nazi navy flag hanging on one wall. On the party decal attached to the 30-gallon water heater on the other side of the room. It is even carved on his fold-down desk top.

There are a number of photographs of Adolf Hitler, one bearing the caption: "He lives."

The Nazi trappings, coupled with the presence of one of those dark veneered console radios from the 30s, gave you the feeling you were in the office of a minor party functionary in prewar Germany. The exposed water and heating pipes and the concrete floors conjured up a little boy's basement clubhouse.

For his part, Kress did not exactly coincide with the Nazi motif. He is a slight, but paunchy man of barely average height. Hardly the Aryan ideal. Like another neo-Nazi I met years ago, there was no fanaticism in his manner. He recited his group's racist views in a quiet, matter of fact tone.

I won't bore or offend you with a recitation of a moth-eaten political philosophy that says we can solve all our problems by sending blacks and Jews back where they came from. But I thought his recent vicissitudes might be of interest.

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KRESS, SEATED IN a chair over which he had thrown the khaki field blouse he wears on appropriate occasions, reported his troubles began when the NSWPP circulars were distributed recently at Penn Treaty Junior High School. The circulars urged white students to protest the presence of blacks in the school. Kress assisted this effort to stir up racial unrest by tacking an inflammatory little pitch on his recorded "white power" telephone message.

Last Thursday, he was urged by the police civil disobedience squad to discontinue his provocative phone message. Kress said he agreed to take it off, although, as he told a caller while I was there, "We hope to have it back on."

On Saturday, Kress said the Human Relations Commission "had this little fat Jew come over and serve me with this envelope." Inside the envelope was notice that the HRC was charging him with a violation of the city's fair practices ordinance because of alleged racial slurs in his phone message.

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ON SUNDAY, the bomb exploded. On Monday, he said the bartender at the tavern across the street refused to serve him. On Tuesday, he lost his job as a lunch truck driver with a Germantown catering firm. He said the boss gave some trivial incident with a customer as the reason for his firing, but he suspected otherwise.

His political beliefs were known to his superiors, he contended. And, he added pointedly, "My supervisor was a Jew."

Wednesday night, 15 members of the militant Jewish Defense League picketed his home to protest his party's activities. Kress was not home. He arrived after the pickets had left.

Life, it seems, is not necessarily pleasant for a man who does his damnest to stir up racial unrest in schools, who subscribes to the racism of a sociopolitical aberration that once exterminated six million people because they were Jews.